

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BUCAR 03764 01 OF 02 021340Z
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 BUCHAREST 3764

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TAGS: EGEN, SHUM, SCUL, PINT, RO

SUBJECT: VISIT TO SATU MARE, BAIE MARE AND TIRGU MURES:
SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE HUNGARIAN SITUATION

1. SUMMARY. IN FIRST OF PROJECTED SERIES OF EMBASSY TRIPS TO AREAS OF ROMANIA INHABITED BY ETHNIC HUNGARIANS, COMATT VISITED SATU MARE, BAIE MARE AND TIRGU MURES FROM MAY 29-31. IN BOTH SATU MARE AND BAIE MARE, JUDETE (COUNTY) OFFICIALS TREATED ACTIVITIES OF HUNGARIAN GROUPS OUTSIDE ROMANIA AS NON-ISSUE. IN TIRGU MURES, WHICH HAS LARGE CONCENTRATION OF ETHNIC HUNGARIANS, LOCAL OFFICIALS DISCUSSED THIS SUBJECT IN SOPHISTICATED AND RELATIVELY CANDID FASHION. AS EMBOFFS HAVE OBSERVED IN PAST, SUPERFICIALLY AT LEAST, TREATMENT ACCORDED ETHNIC HUNGARIANS IN THESE THREE JUDETE APPEARS TO BE EQUAL TO THAT ACCORDED OTHER GROUPS INCLUDING ROMANIAN MAJORITY. ISSUE OF BILINGUALISM, WHICH KIRALY LETTERS APPARENTLY HAVE SERVED TO HAVE BOTH ROMANIANS AND OUTSIDERS EXAMINE MORE CLOSELY, APPEARS TO BE DWARFED AS LOCAL ISSUE BY LARGER QUESTION OF HOW INDIVIDUALS, BE THEY ROMANIAN, ETHNIC HUNGARIAN OR WHATEVER, SATISFY THEIR BASIC NEEDS FOR FOOD, SHELTER AND INCOME. END SUMMARY.

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PAGE 02 BUCAR 03764 01 OF 02 021340Z

2. FROM MAY 29-31, FIRST IN PROJECTED SERIES OF EMBASSY TRIPS TO AREAS OF ROMANIA INHABITED BY ETHNIC HUNGARIANS WAS MADE BY COMATT. FYI. IN MID-MAY, DCM HAD ADVISED MFA DIRECTOR BOGDAN THAT EMBASSY WOULD BE STEPPING UP NUMBER OF VISITS TO MAGYAR REGIONS OF ROMANIA, AND BOGDAN HAD WELCOMED INITIATIVE. END FYI. MEETINGS

WITH JUDETE OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS
TOOK PLACE IN SATU MARE, BAIE MARE AND TIRGU MURES.

3. IN BOTH SATU MARE AND BAIE MARE, WHERE ETHNIC
HUNGARIAN POPULATION IS LESS THAN 15 PERCENT OF TOTAL
JUDET POPULATION, JUDETE OFFICIALS TREATED ACTIVITIES
OF HUNGARIAN GROUPS OUTSIDE ROMANIA AS NON-ISSUE. THEIR
BASIC CONCERNS IN CONVERSATION WITH COMATT RELATE TO
PLAN FULFILLMENT, 1979 ANNUAL PLAN TARGETS, DRAFTING OF
1981-1985 PLAN TARGETS, AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW
ECONOMIC MECHANISM, WITH EMPHASIS RE LATTER ON SWITCH
FROM GLOBAL PRODUCTION TO NET PRODUCTION INDICATORS.
RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS RELATING TO ETHNIC HUNGARIAN
MINORITY IN THESE JUDETE WERE LIMITED TO INCANTATIONS
OF STANDARD CEAUSESCU AND RCP PRONOUNCEMENTS ON NON-
DISCRIMINATORY TREATMENT OF ALL MINORITIES IN
ROMANIA. ONLY GROUP WHICH ANY OF THESE OFFICIALS
WOULD ADMIT SUFFERED ANY DISCRIMINATION WAS LOCAL
GYPSY POPULATIONS.

4. MEANWHILE, IN TIRGU MURES, WHERE 44 PERCENT OF THE
JUDET'S TOTAL POPULATION IS ETHNIC HUNGARIAN (50 PERCENT
IS ROMANIAN AND 4-5 PERCENT GERMAN), JUDET VICE-
PRESIDENT IOAN BENKO, WHILE INTERESTED IN
DISCUSSING THE LOCAL ECONOMY, WAS ALSO PREPARED TO
DISCUSS IN SOPHISTICATED AND RELATIVELY CANDID FASHION
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PAGE 03 BUCAR 03764 01 OF 02 021340Z

THE QUESTION OF LOCAL TREATMENT OF THE ETHNIC HUNGARIAN
MINORITY. AS WAS TO BE EXPECTED, BENKO TROTTED OUT
THE USUAL EXAMPLES OF NON-DISCRIMINATORY TREATMENT,
I.E., FACT THAT NUMEROUS ETHNIC HUNGARIANS, INCLUDING
HIMSELF, HOLD HIGH-LEVEL PARTY AND GOVERNMENT POSITIONS
AS WELL AS COMPARABLE ONES IN INDUSTRY, THE ARTS AND
AGRICULTURE; UNIVERSITY CLASSES, INCLUDING THOSE IN THE
MEDICINE FACULTY, ARE OFFERED IN BOTH ROMANIAN AND
HUNGARIAN; AND, AVAILABILITY OF BOTH CULTURAL PERFORMANCES,
NEWSPAPERS, MAGAZINES AND BOOKS IN BOTH LANGUAGES. BENKO
MADE FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS OF INTEREST:

--AS ETHNIC HUNGARIANS IN TIRGU MURES LISTEN TO
RADIO FREE EUROPE, THEY KNOW ABOUT THE ACTIVITIES OF
HUNGARIAN GROUPS OUTSIDE ROMANIA INCLUDING THOSE OF
HUNGARIAN GROUPS IN THE U.S. (HOWEVER, BENKO DID NOT
ELABORATE ON WHAT COMMENTS IF ANY THE LOCAL HUNGARIANS
MADE ABOUT THESE BROADCASTS).

--SEVERAL ASPIRING HUNGARIAN ACTORS FROM HUNGARY
COME EACH YEAR TO TIRGU MURES TO STUDY ACTING AT THE
"RENOWNED" LOCAL ACTING INSTITUTE.

--THERE ARE DAILY TRANSPORTATION LINKS (I.E., BUS OR TRAIN AND SOMETIMES CHARTER FLIGHTS) BETWEEN HUNGARY AND TIRGU MURES. AVAILABILITY OF THIS SERVICE INDICATES THAT GOR IS NOT PREVENTING MOVEMENT BETWEEN THESE TWO AREAS. IN CASE OF DEATH IN HUNGARY OF RELATIVE OF SOMEONE LIVING IN TIRGU MURES, A PASSPORT IS IMMEDIATELY ISSUED TO THE SURVIVING RELATIVE SO THAT HE MAY ATTEND THE FUNERAL.

--DESPITE THE 1974 LAW PROHIBITING FOREIGNERS FROM STAYING IN PRIVATE HOMES OF ROMANIAN CITIZENS, THE SUMMER INFUX OF TOURISTS, MAINLY FROM HUNGARY AND INCLUDING MANY DISTANT RELATIVES OF LOCAL ETHNIC HUNGARIAN, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 BUCAR 03764 01 OF 02 021340Z

RENDERS ADEQUATE ENFORCEMENT OF THIS LAW AN IMPOSSIBILITY.

5. COMMENT. AS EMBOFFS HAVE DISCERNED IN PAST, SUPERFICIALLY AT LEAST, TREATMENT ACCORDED ETHNIC HUNGARIANS IN SATU MARE, BAIE MARE AND TIRGU MURES APPEARS TO BE EQUAL TO THAT ACCORDED OTHER GOUPS INCLUDING ROMANIAN

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PAGE 01 BUCAR 03764 02 OF 02 021350Z
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 2 BUCHAREST 3764
MAJORITY. WHILE THERE IS ALMOST COMPLETE ABSENCE OF HUNGARIAN LANGUAGE SIGNS IN THESE THREE JUDETE, COMATT DID OBSERVE TWO BILINGUAL OFFICIAL PRONOUNCE-

MENTS IN TIRGU MURES, ONE DETAILING THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF A LOCAL GNA BI-ELECTION AND OTHER CALLING FOR WORKER COUNCIL DISCUSSION OF PENDING URBAN TRANSPORTATION INCREASES, DISPLAYED SIDE-BY-SIDE IN TWO STOREFRONTS IN TIRGU MURES. ON OTHER HAND, SCARCITY OF HUNGARIAN LANGUAGE SIGNS EITHER FOR STORES OR STREETS COULD CONCEIVABLY CONNOTE THAT THIS IS NOT GUT ISSUE FOR LOCAL HUNGARIAN POPULACE, WHICH STILL STRUGGLING ALONGSIDE WITH ROMANIAN MAJORITY TO ASSURE ITSELF OF ADEQUATE SUPPLY OF SOME NECESSITIES OF LIFE AS FOOD, HOUSING AND MONEY. FOLLOWING COMMENTARY MADE BY BENKO POINTED IN THIS DIRECTION: BENKO SAID HE ASKED ETHNIC HUNGARIAN BLUE-COLLAR WORKER IN TIRGU MURES IF HE WORKER WERE UPSET BY FACT THAT SIGN OUTSIDE MEAT STORE WAS ONLY IN ROMANIAN. THE WORKER REPLIED, "I DON'T CARE IN WHAT LANGUAGE THE SIGN IS, AS LONG AS THERE IS MEAT AVAILABLE INSIDE FOR ME TO BUY".

6. AT SAME TIME, KIRALY LETTERS APPARENTLY HAVE HAD EFFECT OF WRAPPING ROMANIANS AS WELL AS OUTSIDERS AROUND PUBLIC BILINGUALISM AXLE. FACT THAT JUDET DEPUTY HAS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 BUCAR 03764 02 OF 02 021350Z

BEEN QUESTIONING WORKER IS ONE TESTIMONY. ANOTHER AROSE IN DCM'S JUNE 1 CONVERSATION WITH MAGAZIN ISTORIC EDITOR CRISTIAN POPISTEANU, WHO TRAVELED TO U.S. WITH TEAM OF ROMANIAN MAGYAR INTELLECTUALS IN TANDEM WITH CEAUSESCU VISIT IN APRIL. POPISTEANU VOLUNTEERED THAT A GREAT DEAL OF ATTENTION IN ROMANIA IS BEING DEVOTED TO MINOR ISSUES "SUCH AS LANGUAGE OF STREET SIGNS," WITH PASSIONS RISING OVER TRIVIALITIES.

IN POPISTEANU'S VIEW, THERE ARE TWO HUNGARIAN PROBLEMS IN ROMANIA--OUTSIDE AGITATION AND REAL PROBLEMS OF DEALING WITH LARGE MAGYAR MINORITY--WHICH WILL NOT BE SOLVED OVERNIGHT. HE AGREED THAT WE ARE NOT ALWAYS ADEQUATELY DISTINGUISHED EITHER HERE OR ABROAD. AGGREY

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